Make Everything Beautiful

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Make Everything Beautiful

by air_of_the_Waterfall

Summary

On a rainy afternoon, Little Hannibal gets carried away with some craft glitter. Will learns a bit about his past and is completely overwhelmed by love.

Notes

I've missed this series so much! I'm sorry for the wait!

Will, having never spent much time with parents, caregivers, or small children in his previous life, never learned to be suspicious of long periods of silence.

It was quite normal for Hannibal to spend entire days reading or sketching as his adult self, perhaps to music or the intricate tune of his own thoughts. Will loved to share the couch with him, entangled comfortably and immersed in his own books while summer rain pattered the roof, its murmuring merging with a crackling fire. Their life together was one of tender creation when they weren't revelling in destruction.

Today, the house sat in shadows as thick thunder clouds encroached on the late afternoon, and persistent unease clutched Will's ankles. He hadn't seen Hannibal since this morning when he wandered off to compose. For a while, the gorgeous music drifted through the house and left Will feeling syrupy. It had lulled him to sleep on the couch alone, and when he woke with a crick in his neck, the house was silent but for the wind.

He remembered too vividly the fear in Hannibal's eyes when strong winds last came to sniff about their home, and maybe that wouldn't be an issue again, but Will would feel better if he knew for sure.

"Hannibal?" he called, stretching and cracking his joints as Rosamund and Dante led him upstairs with knowing woofs. He scratched behind their ears in thanks and peeked into the spare room they'd turned into an art studio. No sign of Hannibal in the main room, but the closet door was open wide and a grin split Will's face.

Sure enough, he found the ladder to the attic extended with a soft glow highlighting the trap door. He climbed it, trying and failing to shed the odd anxiety that haunted him.

"Han— oh, shit."

Hannibal, bright-eyed and unblinking as ever, crouched on his knees and elbows on a grid of interlocking foam mats. He looked like a loafing cat in fluffy striped pajamas, and Will had no trouble imagining the curious tail to match. About three inches from Hannibal's face sat a lava lamp, which cast blue shadows around the playroom, and his eyes devotedly followed the wax globs undulating about like jellyfish. One arm floated up as if to join them, fingers brushing in the air to make a handful of craft glitter snow in unison.

There was glitter *everywhere.*

Will opened his mouth only to close it again, unable to summon any anger even though cleaning this up felt less plausible than catching the Ripper ever had.

"Hi, Will," Hannibal chirped without looking up, completely unbothered.

"Hi," Will sighed, folding his arms on the floor while still standing on the ladder underneath. "What are you doing?"

Hannibal finally looked at him, then blinked as if Will were remarkably obtuse. "I'm making colours."

A huge, proud grin lit him up as he slid his eyes back to the lamp and tilted his head. “Isn’t it pretty?”

“Yes, Hannibal, it’s very pretty.”

He shot Will a glare. “You don’t sound like it. Mischa will like it. When will she be home? I want to show her.”

Gingerly, Will climbed fully into the room and crawled to sit cross-legged opposite him, heedless of the glitter that would cake his pants and socks. It would probably be wise to contain such a hazard instead of carrying it out around the house, but the lava lamp reflecting in Hannibal’s wide, happy eyes was hypnotic. He watched Will expectantly, waiting for an answer that could never be spoken.

Will carefully, pointedly looked around. “Honey, it looks like you’re having a very good time, but what did we talk about last week?”

Hannibal’s brow furrowed, and he sat up somewhat clumsily to mirror Will’s pose. “Thinking carefully about consequences,” he recited. Then, his face fell and he looked around. “Did I make a mess?”

His eyes met Will’s again, fearful and imploring. Will skipped a breath and backpedaled, terrified to say the wrong thing. If he’d been parenting a regular kid here, he’d probably make this a lesson on responsibility or make them clean up all the glitter. As it was, Hannibal was perfectly brilliant and capable ninety percent of the time, and what he needed in this ten percent was the freedom to watch pretty, calming colours if he liked.

“No, honey,” Will finally replied. “No, it’s beautiful. Look how bright the colours are against that paper over there.”

Hannibal beamed and looked where Will pointed, clapping his hands and bouncing. “You’re right! I love it.”

Will beamed right back, and Hannibal fell over giggling, almost making a glitter angel on the foam. The first rain began to dance in the clouds and on the house, droplets catching glints of blue on the attic’s small window where the lamp’s glow hit. Will let the moment stretch a while longer, watching Hannibal stare at the galaxy mobile that hung from the ceiling. Will had made it for him recently and it quickly became Little Hannibal’s favourite thing.

“Hanni?”

“Yes, Will?”

“Were you afraid I’d be upset at you?”

Hannibal blinked and sat up, glitter shaking out of his hair. “Uh-uh.”

“Are you sure? You looked like you were. You know I’ll never be upset at you, right? Even if I get upset at you for a minute, I’ll never stay that way.”

Hannibal seemed to consider this, then looked down at his rainbow-stained hands. “I made it beautiful. It’s not a mess. I never make a mess. Greta always said I made a mess.”

“Who’s Greta?”

“Our nanny. Greta didn’t like when I made pretty things. She hit the back of my head and said I was a ‘nuisance.’ All the staff thought I was bad. They said prayers when they knew I was the devil.”

Will’s hands clenched into shaking fists. He’d be needing a list of all the people who worked for the Lecter Estate in the seventies. In the meantime, he gently took his little one’s hand.

Hannibal went on, glowering. “I told Mama that Greta hit me and Father wouldn’t let her fire her. Father said I had to be more ‘sponsible and grow up and be a better example for Mischa. I didn’t want to be bad for Mischa.”

Will’s heart was breaking along the same scarred fissures as always. “You weren’t bad for Mischa, sweetheart.”

“Mama helped me make pretty things,” Hannibal added as if he hadn’t heard. “With snails and butterflies. Mischa likes butterflies.”

The story couldn’t be over. Something was missing. Will squeezed his hand in the hopes of focusing him.

“Hannibal… what happened to Greta?”

Hannibal’s sharp, wondering stare wandered the sparkling landscape of this cherished secret place, and he absently began to rock back and forth. Will’s heart was pounding and he couldn’t quite pinpoint why. He knew that any psychiatrist in the *world* would sell a limb to be in this room, in Will’s place, with such a sought-after creature so vulnerable and trusting. Rage flared through him at the very thought, but he took a breath to pay attention as Hannibal leaned closer across the lamp’s warm glow. A small, secretive smile touched his face.

Finally, he met Will’s eyes and whispered, “I made her pretty.”

The two of them sat still for a moment, listening to the rain, then Will returned the quiet smile and reached to cradle his beloved’s face with his free hand.

“Han…” he sighed, on the verge of a coo. “Hannibal, Hannibal, Hannibal.”

“You won’t tell.”

“Never. C’mere.”

Hannibal crawled around the lava lamp and settled contentedly in Will’s lap against his shoulder. Will gently rocked him, then combed soothing fingers through his hair before resting his cheek there.

“You know what I think they meant, Han? When they said you were the devil?”

Hannibal scowled. “What?”

“In the beginning, the devil was the best of all the angels.”

Now, Hannibal nuzzled Will’s shoulder with a sleepy smile. “I like when you call me angel.”

Will hummed. “Precious, brilliant angel. I’m going to keep you forever.”

“No one else can ever know,” Hannibal whispered. “They’d take me away.”

Holding him tighter and watching the blue light dance, Will felt Hannibal nearly fall asleep before a half-formed mumble fought it back.

“Where’s my pacifier?” he asked, rubbing his eyes with one hand.

Will gently nudged the hand away before he got glitter in them, then offered, “I have a better idea.”

For the next ten minutes, he guided Hannibal carefully down the ladder and helped him wash his hands, then dressed him in clean pajamas and carried him to bed for his nap. Will was used to carrying a sleepy Little Hannibal around the house by now, so despite his adult size it took no effort. Once he got him snuggled into the blankets, he kissed his hair and stood up.

“Will!”

“I’ll be right back, I promise. It’s okay if you fall asleep.”

“I’m not tired!”

Will held in a laugh. “Liar. I’ll just be gone for five minutes.”

He slipped out of the room and into the kitchen. When he returned, Hannibal was stubbornly sitting up in the middle of the bed, even though he looked like he was about to fall over.

“Not tired…” he repeated, trailing off when he saw what Will had brought him. His eyes widened and he reached out with eager grabby hands, whining and likely regressing further back in time.

Will set the bottle on the nightstand and climbed under the blankets, helping Hannibal settle in close to his chest. Eyelids drooping, Hannibal kept mumbling through and trying to squirm around for the nightstand.

“Sshh,” Will soothed, patting his back and reaching for the bottle himself as he adjusted the pillows behind him. Finally, he got them both comfortable and held the bottle to Hannibal’s mouth.

With a tiny gasp, Hannibal latched on just like his familiar pacifier. The bottles were newer, but he’d taken to them with grateful adoration. Will stared down in quiet wonder at his tousled head and barely open eyes, and the slow but steady vanishing of warm milk in clear plastic. Soft suckling noises and a sweet smell filled the room.

“There you go,” Will soothed, knowing his voice did the trick more so than the words in this state. “There you go. All better. You’re safe...”

He couldn’t speak much longer, trembling off into a sigh. It was difficult to comprehend much of anything in the face of what this made him feel. His breath hitched, and he let himself cry into his sleeping baby’s hair.

“Hannibal,” he managed, and that was more than enough.

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